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Gov Gregoire will Cut Ribbon... Opening New Veterans Facility



Almost a century has passed since the Washington Veterans Home in Retsil first opened its doors to provide care for aging veterans of the Civil War and their wives.

On February 22, 1910, 127 men and women from all areas of the state became the first residents of the Veterans Home, as local and state dignitaries presided over the home's Grand Opening. Many of the new residents had been camping in tents on the 31 acre campus, waiting for the day they could move into their new home.

On March 25, 2005, the Washington Veterans Home will once again celebrate as the ribbon is cut at the Grand Opening of a 240 bed long-term care facility. The

first phase of construction began in early 2003, on a new dining hall and kitchen. This phase was completed in May 2004, and immediately began serving residents.

Throughout construction, a number of the Veterans Home's 240 residents dedicated their leisure time to keeping a close eye on the project. They became known as Sidewalk Superintendents as they shared their personal building industry experiences with the construction crews on-site.

The Grand Opening celebration will begin at 10:00 a.m. with local and state dignitaries – including Governor Christine Gregoire – participating in the Ribbon Cutting, followed by tours of

the new building. "This will be the first opportunity the general public will have to view the new facility," said John King, director of the Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs. "We are very proud to be providing our veterans with such a beautiful new home."

Later, each resident will have their own personal volunteer "buddy" from the USS Stennis pack and move them across the campus to their new home.

"It is wonderful to have these volunteers step forward to provide a smooth transition for our residents," said King.

***You're Invited
to the
Grand Opening
of
Washington
Veterans Home
Friday, March 25,
2005
10:00 a.m.***

Director's Message

WDVA Continues to be a National Model

One thing I won't tire of any time soon, is hearing the work of WDVA described as a model for the nation. As an agency we continue to work harder and smarter than I ever thought possible and it is the hard work of you and your teams that is being highlighted across the country!

Staff at the Veteran Service Centers are implementing a comprehensive Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to ensure federal, state and local agencies are working together to serve the needs of our returning National Guard and Reservists. This MOU is being described as the model for the nation by Governor Gregoire and the Federal VA. Other states have taken notice as well, and are duplicating the program to provide coordinated services to their veterans.

Our three Veterans Homes continue to meet the challenge of providing the highest quality of care, which includes ensuring rooms are cleaned, refurbished and ready to accept new veterans. It takes exceptional teamwork to make this possible, especially considering the number of veterans being served at the Homes is higher than ever before, with census between 95 -100% on any given day. Not only are we serving as many veterans as possible, we are also demonstrating, to leaders in our state and nation, that there is a

tremendous need in Washington State for our three State Veterans Homes.

Over the past two years, members of the agency's Construction Team oversaw the building of a 240-bed nursing facility at Retsil. Staff on the team assisted the architects and engineers in developing a building design that would meet the needs of our unique veteran population. This building design is now being referred to as a model for future nursing homes to follow. While staff and residents at the Veterans Home prepare to move into this magnificent facility, they have maintained operations at the home with such efficiency that even after six days of a recent DSHS survey, only four minor recommendations were found - congratulations!

As our state welcomes home thousands of veterans from Iraq, Afghanistan and other regions of the world, you have made sure the Washington Department of Veterans Affairs is ready to assist them. We will continue fine-tuning our programs and developing new ways to serve the changing needs of our state's veterans. In the future, we will look toward service coordination for some of our most vulnerable veterans, our homeless veterans to demonstrate that our vision of "*Serving Those Who Served*" includes everyone who served.



@ VET SERVICE CENTERS...

Veterans Service Centers Answer the Call... Literally!

By Jim Rising, Olympia Veterans Service Center Program Manager

On an average day, the Olympia Veterans Service Center hums along at a steady pace, with staff members answering phone calls on the toll-free line. Since the return of the 81st Brigade and the agency's targeted outreach to our state's newest veterans, the number of calls is reaching record highs! Not only is the service center handling the usual calls from veterans needing claims assistance and Veterans Estate Management Program (VEMP) clients, they are now beginning to field a growing number of calls from

veterans of Operations Enduring Freedom, Iraqi Freedom, and Noble Eagle. The message... The outreach we're providing to our state's newest veterans is working and it's needed.

This outreach initiative began in November, 2004, when WDVA facilitated the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between a number of federal, state and local agencies. The goal of the MOU was to ensure that no veteran fell through the cracks of the VA system.

When members of the National Guard return to Washington State, they go through a five day demobilization process. As a result of the MOU, the last

Answer the Call Continued

briefing the National Guard soldiers now receive is from a WDVA Veteran Benefits Specialist, typically Tom Riggs or Joel Berlien.

Service Officers providing claims service to veterans returning from extended deployments, have long known that when a soldier is going through out-briefings, their focus is not always on the information being provided, it's on going home and seeing their families! WDVA staff saw the results of this first hand, when a unit that had been home for 11 months recently attended one of the benefits briefings. Even after being home for almost a year, the number of soldiers who signed up for services was high:

- Almost all signed up for the 2 years of free health care provided by the Federal VA
- 70% filed claims for disabilities
- 43% self-referred for readjustment counseling services

These numbers are confirmation that WDVA is moving in the right direction in providing services to our newest generation of Veterans and that WDVA staff are committed to "Serving Those Who Served".

WELCOME THEM HOME

April 16, 2005 * 12:00 program

Veterans Benefits Informational Fair 11 - 2
Vietnam Memorial * Capitol Campus * Olympia

@ Orting...

Soldiers Home Recognizes Outstanding Performance



Sharon Rinehart expresses her desire to continue to good things at Orting, as she accepts the Director's Award.

During the employee recognition event held January 27th, Sharon Rinehart and the Accounts Receivable Team (ART) of Glenda Vick, Vicki Folden and Derold Perry were presented the Directors Award.

Sharon was honored for demonstrating superior initiative and skill by improving the Soldiers

Home ancillary service delivery in rehabilitative services. Her leadership efforts have helped drive productivity to levels that exceed expectations around therapeutic services.

The ART was recognized for their development of an accounts receivable collection log and aging report review program for facility level account management and tracking. Their new system has reduced outstanding balances, and collected over \$200,000 in past due payments.

Kathy Willis, Dietary Office Asst.; Wendy Mahaney, Pharmacy Tech A; Gardeners Martin Freitas and Ralph Firman; and Kathy Huffman, LPN 3 were all presented the Distinguished Service Award.

Others receiving special recognition included the entire nursing staff of Roosevelt Barracks for their outstanding optimistic attitudes during a flu outbreak; and Social Worker John Strickland, for his caring, friendly and approachable environment he has created for residents and staff. Darla Grav in Food Service was recognized for being a wonderful example and mentor to her coworkers.

And finally, Cook Derna Rodewald was honored for demonstrating an exceptional work ethic and keeping morale high among the staff during her 30 years of service at the Washington Soldiers Home.



The Director's Award is presented to the Accounts Receivable Team (ART) of Glenda Vick (not pictured), Vicki Folden and Derold Perry.

@ Retsil...

Article contributed by
Debby Giswold, HR Consultant



Front Row: Monica Messer, Pharmacy Tech; Timothy Hockett, VA Work Study Student; Keith Heino, Pharmacy Mgr.
Back Row: Al Slater, Pharmacist; Tracy Cozzolino, Pharmacy Tech; Paul Holden, Pharmacy Tech (work experience program); Calvin Figley, Pharmacy Asst.

Pharmacy Staff Play a Vital Role in Resident Care and Medication Safety

Beyond compounding and dispensing medications our pharmacy staff are vital members of the multidisciplinary resident-care team. Pharmacy Manager Keith Heino and Pharmacist Al Slater play a critical role in advising prescribers on the best drug choices, and working directly with nursing staff and residents to ensure they understand how to use medications safely and effectively. They are experts on the thousands of medications available today, how each one works in the body, and the ways to use each one safely and effectively. They advise on the best medications and monitor every resident's medication therapy and provide quality checks to detect and prevent harmful drug interactions, reactions, or mistakes.

Full Pharmacy services are provided to both Veterans Home and Spokane Veterans Home thanks to the assistance of our highly trained, certified Pharmacy Technicians Tracy Cozzolino and Monica Messer, as well as Pharmacy Assistant Calvin Figley. The pharmacy staff is constantly learning and embracing new technologies and procedures to facilitate safe

and timely filling of prescriptions. We are also pleased to have the additional services of Pharmacy Technician Paul Holden through a work experience program, and VA Work Study Timothy Hockett.

The Management team of the Washington Veterans Home took the opportunity Friday, February 25, 2005 to recognize and thank the Pharmacy staff for their continued excellent efforts.

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Annual DSHS Survey Concludes

By Superintendent Jon Clontz

The DSHS survey team conducted their exit briefing March 3rd, finding the facility to be in substantial compliance with only four minor recommendations.

The DSHS survey process is intense, tenacious and thorough. It's a measurement of the facilities core systems, care consistency and overall quality in all aspects of care, service, fiscal responsibility, ethical standards and many other areas.

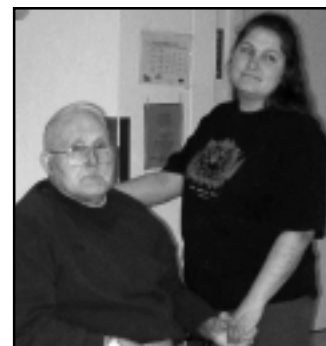
Retsil has demonstrated excellence in all of these areas of responsibility and can be proud of an outstanding survey outcome achieved in the midst of an enormous construction project, limited space, multiple construction reviews and many other challenges. Despite these challenges, our staff never once took their eye off the ball, lost focus or forgot their core mission of providing quality care.

Every member of the staff should be extremely proud of this accomplishment. It is a mammoth effort

to consistently provide a level of service that results in a survey outcome of this quality. This outcome recognizes that teamwork, systems, focus, and genuine sincerity and passion exist with the entire body of staff at Retsil.

I cannot begin to express how proud I am of these results and how honored I am to be a part of this team. As the Superintendent and the newest member of the leadership team, I feel blessed to have a team that has the right focus, the right vision and the right commitment along with a high degree of skill and initiative.

I credit the skill and dedication of staff, leadership of managers and deep commitment from everyone for this high level of success.



Darcy Lester, NA2-C and Mr. Dahlke.

@ SPOKANE...

Kitchen Project Moves Along

Since the Spokane Veterans Home opened its doors in September, 2001, meals have been delivered three times a day in a "bulk" supply to be served to our residents, and except for simple things, like toast and sandwiches, there has not been the ability to prepare food on site.

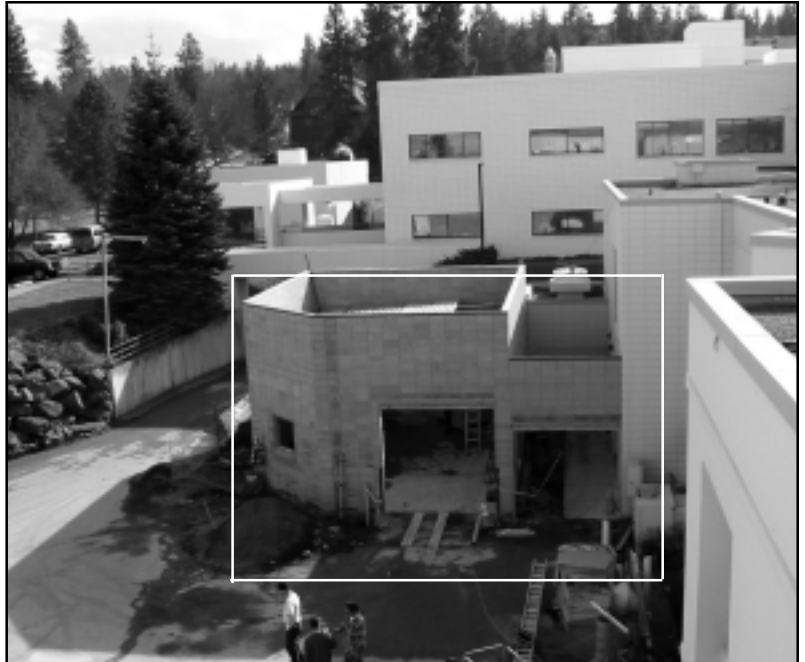
That will soon change.

The 2004 State Legislature provided WDVA with the opportunity to build a new kitchen and expanded dining space, by providing 35% of the project cost, with the Federal VA providing 65%. Fortunately, space had been provided for a kitchen when the building was constructed in 1987, but was not being utilized for that purpose.

Once the funding was in place, a very aggressive project schedule was developed to provide completion of the project on or before June 30, 2005, when the current contract with the home's food vendor expires.

"The new kitchen and expanded dining space will allow more options of food choices, dining times and ability for residents to dine with their family members," said Kathy Magonigle, the SVH Administrator.

"This will increase the quality of life for all who live here and will make our environment more home-like. The residents are anxiously awaiting the smells of home cooking!"



This section, still under construction, will be used as the commissary/maintenance building.

@ CENTRAL OFFICE...

IS Introduces New WorkOrder Process

Governor Gregoire's Executive Order on Government Management Accountability, and Performance will drive many changes across State Government.

To continue with the tradition of providing excellent customer service, the WDVA Information Services Team has stepped up and implemented a new customer service survey using our automated WorkOrder system. We've been using the HEAT WorkOrder system for several years, but the I.S. Technical Support Survey is new. Here's how it works. When you need to request technical support from your I.S. staff, send an e-mail work request to the "DVA IS WorkOrder" mailbox. You'll find a link to this mailbox on the WDVA V-NET homepage in the Tool Box list, or you can use the DVA address book in Outlook. If it is an emergency issue, please call us on the phone and then follow-up with an e-mail to the "DVA IS WorkOrder

mailbox". When your work request is received, an actual WorkOrder is automatically generated and logged into our system. Then, the WorkOrder is assigned to a technician. Once your WorkOrder has been resolved and closed, this system automatically generates the I.S. Technical Support Survey which is sent to you via e-mail.

Once you receive the survey e-mail, you'll need to first click the Reply button and then scroll down and complete the survey. Please take the time to fill out this survey and send it back to us. The results of the survey will tell us how we are doing, and what we can do to improve the services and support we provide to the WDVA staff. Following these procedures will insure that you receive a prompt reply and timely resolution to your request, and help us keep track of our work load. If you have any questions, please contact Jeff Kiper at (360) 586-4148, or send an e-mail to jeffk@dva.wa.gov.

Congratulations Cheryl Rule



Staff at the Soldiers Home celebrated with Cheryl Rule recently because she received her Bacholers in Nursing. The potluck was also a *send off*, as she will be joining the DSHS Survey Team, surveying Adult Family Homes and Assisted

Living in the South Seattle area.

Cheryl was a RN3, QA, and Investigation Nurse. She did an excellent job investigating incidents and setting up interventions to prevent incidents from reoccurring. Prior to that, she was the MDS Nurse. The Home will miss her but wish her well in her new job.



SUSTAINABILITY CORNER



DROUGHT

By now, you have probably heard Washington State is facing drought conditions this summer. In fact, Governor Gregoire has announced a state-wide drought emergency.

The National Weather Service Climate Prediction Center predicts a moderate drought for western Washington and a severe drought for eastern Washington.

As we enter the summer months think of how you can contribute to reducing water usage this summer. If you plan on putting in landscaping, consider native plants that don't require as much water as those from other climates. Try fertilizing your plants and lawn with natural foods to keep them healthy and reduce the amount of water they require to stay alive. Capture rainwater (if there is any!) and look for conservative ways to wash your car, your laundry and commit to cutting a minute or two off your showers. Cutting back on electricity usage will also help!

Mandatory restrictions are not new to the Pacific Northwest and you can probably count on having them again this year. It will take everyone doing their part to ensure our streams have enough water for our fish and our farmers have enough to produce our foods.

"Nature provides a free lunch, but only if we control our appetites."

--William Ruckelshaus

Prepare... Because You Care!



Drop, Cover, and Hold Earthquake Drill!

April 21, 2005

9:45 am to 10:00 am

Drop --

Drop down on the floor.

Cover --

Take cover under a sturdy desk, table or piece of furniture. If this is not possible, take cover against an interior wall and protect your head and neck with your arms. Avoid danger spots near windows, hanging objects, mirrors or tall, unsecured furniture.

Hold --

If you take cover under a piece of furniture, hold on to it and be prepared to move with the furniture. Hold the position until the ground stops shaking and it is safe to move.

Drop, Cover and Hold Drill! -- Tips

When in a **HIGH-RISE BUILDING**, move against an interior wall if you are not near a desk or table. Protect your head and neck with your arms. Do not use the elevators.

When **OUTDOORS**, move to a clear area away from trees, signs, buildings, or downed electrical wires and poles.

When on a **SIDEWALK NEAR A BUILDING**, move into a doorway and drop to protect yourself from falling bricks, glass, plaster and other debris.

When **DRIVING**, pull over to the side of the road and stop. Avoid overpasses and power lines. Stay inside your vehicle until the shaking stops.

When in a **CROWDED STORE OR OTHER PUBLIC PLACE**, move away from display shelves containing objects that could fall. Do not rush for the exit.

When in a **STADIUM OR THEATRE**, stay in your seat, get below the level of the back of the seat and cover your head and neck with your arms.